

NCA,
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0633
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APRIL 22, 1976

BOSTON'S MAYOR TAKES TO THE STREETS

ANNCR:

TOMORROW (FRIDAY) IS THE DAY BOSTON'S MAYOR, KEVIN WHITE, PLANS TO LEAD A CITIZENS' MARCH THROUGH THE CITY, IN AN ATTEMPT TO CALM RACIAL TENSION THAT IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAS RESULTED IN VIOLENCE. HERE WITH MORE ON THE STORY, VOA'S ANITA CHAPMAN:

VOICE:

SINCE NINETEEN SEVENTY-ONE, WHEN IT WAS FIRST APPROVED BY THE SUPREME COURT AS A TECHNIQUE FOR DESEGREGATING PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BUSING HAS BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL, EMOTIONAL ISSUE. IN BOSTON IT HAS BEEN FOUGHT WITH PARTICULAR BITTERNESS BECAUSE IT INTRUDED ON THE CLOSE-KNIT ETHNIC LIFE OF THE GROUPS THAT MAKE UP THE CITY. THE BLACK POPULATION, BY COMPARISON WITH OTHER MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES, IS SMALL.

THE CITY, AFTER SOME MONTHS OF CALM, IS AGAIN THE SCENE OF EXPLOSIVE RACIAL INCIDENTS, AS BOTH BLACK AND WHITE SHOW THEIR FRUSTRATION AND CONFUSION WITH BUSING. TWO WEEKS AGO WHITE YOUTHS STRUCK A BLACK LAWYER; A FEW DAYS AGO BLACK YOUTHS BEAT A YOUNG WHITE UNCONSCIOUS; THURSDAY A BOMB WAS PLANTED AT THE COURT HOUSE, INJURING A SCORE OF PEOPLE.

A RECENT GALLUP POLL SHOWS AMERICANS BY AND LARGE HAVE NO PROBLEM ACCEPTING INTEGRATION OF SCHOOLS. BUT THEY CONTINUE TO REJECT THE IMPOSED METHOD OF BUSING. THEY APPARENTLY FEEL IT UNDERCUTS THE AMERICAN CONCEPT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL, TO WHICH CHILDREN CAN WALK AND

AROUND WHICH CLUSTER COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES. SOME FEEL BUSING WAS MADE INTO A FALSE ISSUE BY POLITICAL LEADERS SOME YEARS AGO, AND HAD LITTLE CHANCE OF BEING ADEQUATELY TESTED IN A SANE AND CALM ATMOSPHERE.

WHAT IS CERTAIN IS THAT BUSING HAS POSED VERY REAL PROBLEMS FOR BOTH BLACK AND WHITE PARENTS, DECISIONS FOR INSTANCE AS TO WHETHER THEIR CHILDREN COULD STUDY IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF HOSTILITY. IN BOSTON A THIRD OF WHITE PARENTS TOOK CHILDREN OUT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. OTHERS WHO KEPT THEIR CHILDREN IN, FOUND AFTER THE FIRST YEAR A CERTAIN NEW SENSE OF VITALITY IN THE SCHOOLS, AS TEACHERS RESPONDED TO THE CHALLENGE.

THOUGH PERSONALLY UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT BUSING, BOSTON'S MAYOR KEVIN WHITE HAS LEAD THE FIGHT TO IMPLEMENT IT AND HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN A SPOKESMAN FOR REASON IN THE TUMULT OF PASSION. THIS WEEK (FRIDAY) HE PLANS TO LEAD A MARCH OF ALL ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE CITY, TO WHOM HE HAS APPEALED TO DEMONSTRATE WILINGNESS TO CHANGE THE CLIMATE OF HOSTILITY. MASSACHUSETTS IS THE ONLY STATE WITH A BLACK SENATOR, AND BOTH EDWARD BROOKE AND WHITE SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY HAVE BEEN MODERATING VOICES IN THE BUSING CONTROVERSY.

STILL, AMERICANS SEEM TO BE LOOKING FOR OTHER METHODS FOR COMPLYING WITH THE TWENTY-YEAR OLD LAW TO DESEGREGATE SCHOOLS. A COURT ORDER ON HOUSING THIS WEEK IN CHICAGO MAY POINT TO ANOTHER APPROACH: THAT OF OPENING NEIGHBORHOODS TO DIVERSITIES OF WEALTH AND RACE. THE SCHOOLS WOULD THEN REFLECT THE VARIATION.

IN THE MEANTIME, BOSTON PARENTS, WHETHER SUPPORTING BUSING OR NOT, ARE DISTURBED BY ITS EFFECT ON THEIR LIVES AND THEIR CHILDREN'S LIVES.

JS/RCS